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SUBJECT: EMBASSY CONCURRENCE FOR FY09 HORN OF AFRICA  
COUNTERINSURGENCY ENGAGEMENT 1206 PROPOSAL

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (U) Embassy Addis Ababa has reviewed and supports S/CT's proposal to provide training in Best Practices and Lessons Learned in Counterinsurgency Operations to Ethiopia to help the Ethiopian government (GoE) build its capacity to perform these operations in an effective manner that respects human rights. Embassy Addis Ababa's concurrence of this project is based on assurances from Washington that the project will not provide assistance, equipment, or training to Ethiopian security or defense forces that gives a lethal force capability that could be used against Ethiopian civilians or politically-oriented domestic insurgent movements.

12. (C) Terrorism threatens to undermine stability in the Horn of Africa. Deteriorating security in Somalia's failed state in particular adversely impacts Ethiopia and each of Somalia's neighbors. Ethiopia's military and diplomatic efforts to neutralize extremist elements in Somalia have encountered a number of setbacks and al-Shabaab, a U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization, now exercises control over large segments of southern Somalia. Al-Shabaab also has sheltered and worked alongside al-Qaeda operatives in East Africa. While Ethiopia's military had initial success in preventing extremists from taking over Somalia in 2007-2008, Ethiopia's counterinsurgency capabilities need to be enhanced to meet the continued cross-border threats posed by Somali extremists. Ethiopia has waged domestic security and counterinsurgency campaigns and border control operations that have generated allegations of human rights abuses, particularly in the Ogaden. While the GoE denies these allegations, the credibility of reporting on such abuses requires the preclusion on providing assistance that grants lethal force capacity or tactical advantage noted above.

13. (C) Ethiopia's military needs to refine its counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy, and tactics in order best to broaden public support while targeting genuine extremists and minimizing abuses. U.S. counterinsurgency trainers and experts can share lessons from Iraq and Afghanistan on building relationships with local populations, extracting information from suspects and informants without torture, and avoiding excessive collateral damage in military operations. In addition, they may be able to provide vital non-lethal training equipment to the under-resourced Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF). Improved COIN capabilities will help Ethiopia better address local and regional conflict that can be exploited by extremists and potentially contain the growth of a terrorist safe haven in Somalia.  
YAMAMOTO